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SUBJECT: SLOVAK MOD PRESENTS PLAN FOR FUTURE ENGAGEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. BRATISLAVA 154

[B.](#) SECSTATE 31102

[C.](#) SECSTATE 29482

[D.](#) 2008 BRATISLAVA 276

Classified By: CDA Keith A. Eddins for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[11.](#) (C) Summary. In an April 16 meeting with DATT, ODC Chief and Poloff, officials from the Slovak General Staff detailed their expectations for future deployments to Afghanistan. Slovakia would like to deploy a 15-soldier OMLT in summer 2010 and, pending proper training and equipment, up to 65 special operations forces in early 2011. The deployment of special operations forces would require Parliament to approve a new mandate, which the General Staff did not expect before Spring 2010 elections and the formation of a new government.

[12.](#) (C) Summary continued: In 2008, the Slovak Parliament approved a mandate for up to 246 Slovak soldiers to participate in ISAF (Ref D). That mandate is valid through July 2010, which, probably not coincidentally, is one month after the current government's term in office ends. As of April 15, 231 soldiers were deployed in Afghanistan. End summary.

[13.](#) (C) The General Staff initiated the April 16 meeting in response to the visit and proposals of then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) Roger Zakheim in December 2008. In meetings at MoD, MFA and Parliament, Zakheim presented three proposals for future Slovak engagement in Afghanistan: donating helicopters; leading an OMLT; and deploying special operations forces. Zakheim offered the Slovaks specific U.S. support for each mission, including training and equipment and direct operational support from the Indiana National Guard. Although the General Staff postponed the meeting multiple times in order to "present a complete answer," their response essentially consisted of a stated willingness to accept any assistance on offer, and a commitment to contemplate taking the lead on an OMLT or deploying special operations forces after Spring 2010 Parliamentary elections and the adoption of a new mandate by a new GoS thereafter. The General Staff is still examining - after five months - its capacity to donate helicopters.

OMLT

[14.](#) (C) The current mandate for Slovak forces in Afghanistan includes authorization for up to 15 soldiers to participate in OMLTs. Four soldiers are currently serving with a Dutch OMLT in Uruzgan province. They will be replaced with five new soldiers at the end of their six month rotation in June 2009. Sekelsky said there is a plan to progressively expand participation in an OMLT, culminating in the deployment of the full fifteen approved by Summer 2010. Unfortunately, due

to caveats in the current mandate, those soldiers will remain confined to garrison duties.

15. (C) Sekelsky said Slovakia would like to lead an OMLT by the end of 2010. The ideal for Slovakia would be a garrison-OMLT in RC-South, due to national caveats and Slovakia's existing deployments in that region. Sekelsky said Slovakia's first choice would have been to lead the garrison-OMLT in Kandahar, but Bulgaria had already committed to that mission. Slovakia's second choice would be to take over command of a garrison-OMLT in Tarin Kowt, which he believes does not yet exist. He asked if the U.S. planned to open such an OMLT and, if so, when it would be possible for Slovakia to take over the lead. Once the Slovak General Staff has confirmation such an OMLT will be available, they will be in a position to specify the type of training and assistance they would require. At minimum, Sekelsky said Slovakia would require training, logistical support, and 3-4 U.S. troops to provide specific expertise.

Special Operations Forces

16. (C) Sekelsky said the General Staff would very much like to take advantage of DoD's offer of training and equipment for the 5th Special Operations Regiment, even though the existing mandate does not allow for the deployment of such forces. Sekelsky said the General Staff is thinking it may be possible to deploy approximately 65 members of the 5th Special Operations Regiment in early 2011. The current goal is to secure all of the training and equipment the regiment will need, including new vehicles, in 2009-2010. Sekelsky acknowledged that the current budget situation may make this difficult to achieve. Comment: The MoD has born the brunt of

GoS cost-cutting in the wake of the economic crisis. The PM has publicly said he will look to MoD first when he needs to save money, and that the Minister of Defense should not expect to make any major equipment purchases in 2009. End comment.

17. (C) Embassy comment: The General Staff's current thinking precludes anything but a garrison-OMLT, even in the second half of 2010. In contrast, the idea of deploying special forces in early 2011 presumes a significant change in the Slovak mandate. At the end of the meeting, Sekelsky outlined his view of the way ahead: first, he will secure a letter from Defense Minister Baska outlining the General Staff's aspirational plans. Second, DATT should use that letter to secure assistance from the USG. Finally, the Embassy should lobby Slovakia's political leaders to secure an expanded mandate for Slovak forces. In upcoming meetings with senior Slovak officials -- including President Gasparovic and Foreign Minister Lajcak -- we will underscore the importance of Slovakia fulfilling its commitments and responsibilities as a NATO partner. Ultimately, however, it will be PM Fico's willingness to move forward that is decisive. At every opportunity, we will remind interlocutors at MoD, MFA and in the President's office that senior Slovak government officials who believe Slovakia can and should take on a larger, more robust role in ISAF are in the best position to persuade the skeptical PM to lend his support and grant access to required resources.

EDDINS